

TWO
SERMONS
ON THE
LORD'S-SUPPER.

By THOMAS TOLLER.

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S E R M O N I.
ON THE
O B L I G A T I O N S
T O
C E L E B R A T E
T H E
L O R D ' s - S U P P E R .



S E R M O N I.

I CORIN. V. 7, 8.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED
FOR US : THEREFORE LET US KEEP
THE FEAST.

THE passover was a jewish festival which took its rise from a memorable event. When the people had long groaned under the oppressions of Egypt, the G O D of their fathers beheld them with pity, remembered his covenant, and determined to deliver them. He chose Moses and Aaron for the instruments of accomplishing his benevolent purpose. These hebrew worthies went unto Pharaoh, and asked him, in the

name, and by the direction, of the LORD GOD of Israel, to let his people go, that they might hold a feast unto him in the wilderness. Pharaoh heard them with indignation; and answered, in all the pride of power, who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither ~~will~~ I let Israel go. ~~✱~~ Who wert thou, O man, thus to resist the counsels of the OMNIPOTENT? let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, but wo unto him that striveth with his MAKER.— The God of Israel soon appeared in the majesty of his vengeance. He stretched out his hand, and smote Egypt with his wonders. The tyrant trembled; — and, in his consternation and terror, promised obedience to the divine order; but as soon as the awful judgments were suspended, he again hardened his heart, sinned yet more, and would NOT let the people

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go.—Many a fair promise of reformation, when under the mighty hand of God, hath been as transient as the morning cloud, and as the early dew. — How deceitful and treacherous is the heart of man !

At length it was resolved, that at midnight, all the first born in the land of Egypt should die, from the first born of Pharaoh that sat upon his throne, even unto the first born of the captive that was in the dungeon ; and all the first born of cattle ; while the Israelites escaped the dreadful slaughter : And that the destroying angel might pass by THEIR houses, when, in his fury, he was smiting with death all the first born of Egypt, it pleased divine wisdom to institute the P A S S O V E R. They were commanded to take a male lamb, without blemish, of the first year, a lamb for every house, and to kill, and eat it when

roasted with fire, and to take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts, and on the upper door-posts of their houses, being assured that death should not enter into any house that was thus sprinkled with the blood; and that the blood should be to them for a token; a token, or sign, of their preservation and safety.

This event was too illustrious a display of the goodness and severity of God, to be suffered to sink into oblivion: on them which fell, S E V E R I T Y; but towards them that were preserved, G O O D N E S S. It was the will of the Almighty that it should be transmitted to generations then unborn. As the passover, in the first instance, was observed as a preservative from death; so it was to be a standing ordinance in the church, while the dispensation of Moses remained, as commemorative of that preserva-

tion. They were told that this day should be unto them for a memorial: they were directed to keep it a feast to the Lord throughout their generations; to keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever; and in future times to inform their children, when enquiring into the import of it,—it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.

And as the passover had a retrospect to the preservation of Israel in that night of desolation and death; so it was intended also to prefigure, and typify what was still more wonderful and interesting. The dispensation of Moses was figurative and emblematical; it was a shadow of good things to come. This ordinance was typical of the death of Christ, who shed his precious blood to

save our guilty world. The Apostle, in the text, styles Christ our passover. He was the true passover, of which the other, in the first, as in every future instance, was but the emblem, or shadow.—The Israelites took a lamb and slew it ; and Christ our passover is SACRIFICED for us. He is called the lamb of God, and the lamb slain. — The lamb they slew was without blemish ; and we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. — Their door-posts were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, which when the Angel of death saw he passed by ; and christians are spoken of, in a moral and spiritual sense, as sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ : this is their preservative from the wrath to come ; this is their security from the vengeance of an incensed God. — They fed upon the lamb that was slain ; and christians feed upon Christ by

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faith. Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, said our Saviour, in a strong eastern figure, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

When Christ the true passover was sacrificed for us, the jewish passover which prefigured it was abolished. The type vanished, when the antitype came, as the mists of the morning before the face of mature and perfect day..

But if the preservation of Israel from a TEMPORAL death was, in the eye of divine wisdom, of so much importance as to be a foundation for a commemorative ordinance in the jewish church, is not our preservation from ETERNAL death, by the sacrifice of God's Son, a

just foundation for such an ordinance in the christian? If it was an argument why they should keep the feast that THEIR passover was sacrificed for them, is it not a stronger argument why we should keep the feast that OUR passover is sacrificed for us? our passover, and its consequent blessings, being of infinitely greater value. — The Lord's-supper is the instituted memorial of the death of Christ: ~~and to this our text~~ (though it may admit of a more enlarged interpretation) does, as I apprehend, immediately refer. This is the feast which, as christians, we are required to keep.

That there is a prevailing disregard to this holy institution is a fact too notorious to be denied. It is not disregarded by those only who are quite indisposed to the exercises of devotion, and destitute of all serious principles; but by many who are of decent and sober

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life, and, in the judgment of charity, not without impressions of internal religion. It cannot, therefore, be at all improper, or unseasonable, to vindicate the injured rights of this christian ordinance, by pointing out, and enforcing, our obligations to observe it.

And, in the first place, it is a plain and express command of our LORD. It does not depend upon obscure passages of scripture, which, after all our researches, are of doubtful interpretation. There is no duty more obvious in all the book of God. When Jesus had partaken with his disciples of the final passover, he instituted this ordinance to be, under the gospel, what that was under the law. He took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, take eat; this is my body : And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye

all of it ; for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins. As if he had said, I now appoint a new ordinance in the stead of the paschal supper, which from this time ceases in the church of God ; and as that, in the first instance, respected the salvation of Israel in Egypt, then taking place, and was afterwards, to this day, a memorial of it ; so this bread, and this cup are representative of my body and blood, about to be broken and shed for the salvation of mankind ; and will, after my passion, be commemorative of my bloody death as ~~a sacrifice for their sins.~~ The bread and the cup are stiled Christ's body and blood by the same figure of speech, as the paschal lamb was stiled THE PASSOVER, which was, strictly and properly, the Angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites, when the first born of the Egyptians were slain. And it

was natural to use the same kind of phraseology as was applied to the passover, in the appointment of a new institution in the room of it, especially as the import of such language was universally understood.

The Apostle Paul, who was instructed in the doctrines, and duties of the gospel, by special revelation, thus writes to the Corinthian professors. I have received of the Lord, that which also I have delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread ; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take eat ; this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. —What could be re-

quired in terms more direct and explicit? What could be a stronger proof of the obligation of this ordinance than its being made, after its original appointment, a part of a SPECIAL revelation?

we may in the first place remark
 This ordinance is of PERPETUAL obligation in the christian church. The passover was in force, while the legal dispensation remained, throughout their generations; and the Lord's-supper, by which that was superseded, is to be observed while the gospel remains, that is to say to the very end of time; for this is the most perfect dispensation of religion, and the last that will ever be vouchsafed to our world. There is as MUCH reason for christians, in the present day, to participate of the memorials of Christ's death, as there was for the disciples to whom the command was immediately given. He is the Saviour of ALL them

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that believe. His death is the foundation of our hope, as it was the foundation of theirs: nay, as we live so far distant from the time in which our Saviour suffered, we have MORE need of sensible representations to fix upon our minds strong ideas of his bitter passion. The disciples had long been his intimate friends, and companions, and eye-witnesses of his tragical death; and his recent crucifixion was in their day in the minds of all men. They were, therefore, more likely to possess, and retain, lively and affecting impressions of this great event, without the assistance of visible emblems, than christians in subsequent ages; if, then, THEY were required to keep the feast, in remembrance of Christ's body broken, and blood shed for the remission of sins; must not this be a duty incumbent upon us? would it not be an impeachment of the wisdom of its author to suppose that the institu-

* Passage marked in Henry 235
to come here //

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tion should cease when it became of most consequence and utility? when St. Paul had urged upon the Corinthian converts a due observance of the Lord's-supper, he subjoins, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come: by which he means, that it is to be observed till the consummation of all things; till Christ's second coming; till he shall appear in the clouds of heaven, in his majesty and glory, to wind up the grand schemes of providence, to finish the mystery of God respecting our world, and consign its inhabitants to the everlasting abodes of bliss, or ruin.

This service is not the appointment of fanciful men, who attempt to improve the mode of christian worship; but, in truth, destroy its venerable simplicity, which is its glory. Human inventions distort the lovely features of the

gospel. In matters religious and spiritual, they have no just claim to our regard. Jesus Christ is the ONLY head of his church, and the SOLE law giver in his kingdom. We are not to receive for doctrines the commandments of men. They are a daring inroad on the prerogatives of our Saviour's crown, and have been of pernicious influence in the christian world. Were the ordinance of the supper to be ranked with these, it would merit UNIVERSAL disrepute. But it has a far nobler origin. It bears the signature of sovereign authority. It has the image and superscription of God himself. It was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Father hath made the head over all things unto his church, and invested with all power, both in heaven, and in earth: when he undertook to erect a kingdom of truth, and righteousness, out of the ruins of the fall, he received full power to ordain, for the

PA. 50 obedience of his subjects, whatever he should judge expedient for carrying on the great undertaking. He presided over his church, which is his kingdom, from the earliest ages, and had the direction, and management of its concerns. It is not to be supposed that he was unemployed in the affairs of it, till he appeared, in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He appointed, in every period, such institutions as were best adapted to its state and circumstances. Under the dispensation of Moses there were meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances; these beggarly elements, as the Apostle styles them, being suited to the low genius, and gross prejudices, of the jewish people: but when the gospel dispensation was introduced, he repealed the mosaic ritual as unworthy the spiritual, and enlightened, state of the church in the last times;

*We therefore instead of the many
burthensome & expensive rites of the
Mosaic Law*

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and, instead of its many burthensome, expensive rites, appointed two, plain in their import, and easy to be observed ; one of which is the Lord's-supper. And christians are as indispenibly bound to observe this, as the Hebrews were the most solemn institutions under the law. Its obligation is not to be superseded by the practice of other duties, however great and essential. Though we are fair and upright in our transactions and intercourses with the world ; humane and generous to the distressed and needy ; observant of the laws of temperance and chastity ; and regular in our attendance on the ordinary offices of devotion ; yet these will not excuse an habitual neglect of this DISTINGUISHING duty of our holy religion. We are not to select some of the commands of Christ for our obedience, and reject others. We are bound to obey him in ALL things ; by

naming his name we profess an unreserved subjection to his authority ; we engage to walk in all the ordinances, and commandments of the Lord blameless : but how does our practice correspond with our profession if we never keep the feast ? if we never partake of the memorials of Christ's death ? A wilful disregard to the appointment of the passover did not escape with impunity : the offender was cut off from the people of Israel. And if this act of disobedience to the jewish lawgiver, received such a recompence of reward, can it be a slight offence, (however countenanced by the majority of professors) to disobey an express command of CHRIST THE LORD ? — A command which has the sanction of so high an authority is dangerous to be trifled with.

But the ordinance of the supper is not only the command of a Sovereign ;

it is also, ~~in the second place~~, the appointment of a FRIEND. We have striking and invincible proof of the friendship of God's Son. He hath exhibited the most astonishing instance of condescension and kindness. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. He left the abodes of bliss, and, for a time, resided in our world, in the form of a servant, for the benefit of mankind: this was the object that engaged the attention and labours of his life. He always went about doing good. He was not wholly indifferent to mans temporal felicity. He wiped the tear of sorrow from the weeping eye; and brightened the gloomy heart with chearfulness and joy. Great numbers oppressed with bodily disease experienced the salutary effects of his sovereign compassion. He gave eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, ears to the

deaf, and tongues to the dumb ; and healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. But he laboured more abundantly to remove the maladies of the mind. He was indefatigable in his endeavours to instruct the ignorant, and reclaim the vicious. He was deeply affected with the spiritual condition of this degenerate world. He beheld its misery, and wept over it ; and spared no pains for its relief. He was the restorer of health to distempered souls. He was the only physician of value. And if we, in this distant age, are healed of the leprosy of sin, we are indebted to the skill and friendship of Jesus ; for by the efficacy of his gospel, under the energy of his spirit, we were made whole. And have we not seen, and felt, enough of sin to convince us, that this is a mighty blessing ?

And as mankind are morally diseased, so they are GUILTY before God. When we became sinners, we were a forfeiture into the hands of justice, and obnoxious to the curse of a broken law: and in God's righteous anger, as an offended sovereign, we were destined for vengeance; but, as a Being of infinite clemency and compassion, he was willing to preserve us from going down to the pit, and restore us to favour, upon the payment of such a price as should secure the honour of his attributes, and the dignity of his government. A mighty price, it may be supposed, was required for the impunity, and restoration, of such daring rebels. A mighty price was required, and a mighty price was paid.—Was it the Cattle, upon a thousand hills? Was it the wealth, and treasure, of a great and opulent kingdom? or of all the great and opulent kingdoms of the earth? Though this is a price of

immense value, in a worldly estimation; yet it is too mean and inconsiderable for the redemption of ONE Soul. We were not to be redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. Our exemption from divine vengeance, and advancement to happiness, was to be obtained by nothing less than the precious blood of Christ. Without the shedding of his blood the offended Deity saw meet to grant no remission. And did the Prince of life, and the Lord of glory, DIE for us?—hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!—yes, the Prince of life, and the Lord of glory, did die for us. He hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. He did not withhold the price of his blood. As there was no sorrow like unto his sorrow, so there was no love like unto his love. Many waters could not quench its ardour, nor the floods drown it. The

approach of death, in its most terrifying form, could not shake his generous purpose to redeem and save us. His love was stronger than death. He freely submitted to all the disgrace and agony of the cross: being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the cross.

Of what inexpressible value must be the souls of men to redeem which the great Immanuel paid down the price of his blood! And what an extreme of folly, and madness, to barter precious, and immortal, souls for the trash of time! But, is not this the folly, and madness, of the generality of the world? Do they not reject the overtures of pardon, reconciliation with God, and life eternal, for the sake of honours, profits, or pleasures, which are empty as a vapour, and fleeting as a shadow? The

God of this world, by the most fatal infatuation, hath blinded their minds.

Mankind became in one view, as we have seen, the prisoners of divine justice; in another, the S L A V E S of the infernal tyrant. He is called the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; and is represented as having taken them captive at his will. The Son of God beheld his usurped dominion with generous indignation. He felt a strong, and ardent, passion to dethrone him; and by dethroning him, to rescue our race from a state of slavery infinitely more abject, and wretched, than that of Israel in Egypt when most cruel and oppressive. The slavery of the mind is infinitely more distressing than the slavery of the body. He girded his sword upon his thigh; and bravely fought our battles against the grand enemy of human happiness. He fell. — But he conquered when he fell.

Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross. The victory of the cross was great and decisive. He said, it is **F I N I S H E D**: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Nor did the friendship of our Saviour terminate in his death. On the third day after his crucifixion he left the mansions of the dead, and, when he had instructed his apostles, for the space of forty days, in things pertaining to his kingdom, he ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right-hand of the Majesty on high. And in this state of exaltation, and glory, he is mindful of us, and of our interests. Through

life, and in the dreadful hour of death, when suspended on a cross amidst an insulting multitude, and seated on a throne, amidst adoring Angels, he is the Friend of men. Our names are written on his heart, like the names of the tribes of Israel on the breast-plate of the high-priest. — He holds the reins of providence. He daily pours out upon our world unnumbered blessings; dividing to every man severally as he will. He allots to those who are devoted to his service that share of temporal enjoyments, which his unerring wisdom judges to be best for them: this is true, both when we are full and when we are hungry, both when we abound and when we suffer need: a consideration which forcibly recommends, in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content. — He sympathizes with us in our sorrows: ^{for} we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feel-

ing of our infirmities. He administers powerful support under the pressures and calamities of life, ⁸⁴proportioning our strength to our day: ~~and in the fittest season, and by the fittest means, gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.~~ — He is our guardian and our guide. He directs us when in difficulty; and shelters us when in danger. He is a sun and shield. He is an hiding-place from the wind, and ~~a covert from the tempest.~~ He is a present help in every time of need. — He is our intercessour and advocate. He presents our petitions to the throne of mercy, and pleads our cause with the eternal Father. — ~~He is our forerunner and representative.~~ He is entered within the vail, and hath prepared for us mansions of glory. — In a word, he is the great captain of our salvation. He animates, and aids, us in our spiritual

conflicts. As he hath overcome, he enables us to overcome ; and leads us on from victory to victory ; and will finally introduce us into a state of everlasting joy and triumph. ⁵⁷ The effects of his powerful and benevolent interpositions will reach to the remotest periods of eternity. *Sanctification of the Christian by the Spirit* What are the most illustrious instances of human friendship when compared with the friendship of the Saviour ? less than the drop of the bucket : less than the dust of the balance.

The selfish Jews imagined that they alone were entitled to the benefit of the Messiah's advent ; and looked on all others as having no part nor lot in him. But his thoughts were not like their thoughts. His liberal Soul was a stranger to the narrow, fordid, principles which reigned in their breasts. The love of Christ was not confined, like the partialities of men, to his kindred, or

to his acquaintance; or even to his own nation. His benignity was as ample and extensive as the united regions of our world. And though he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to exercise among them his personal ministry: yet no people under heaven is excluded from the benefit of his death and mediation. After he was risen he did not say to his apostles,—go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but,—go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. And, in consequence of his unbounded love, a great multitude, which no man can number, shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. How amazing the philanthropy of the Redeemer! The love of Christ passeth knowledge.



Now, let me appeal to every one present, should we not express, and in the MANNER he hath directed, our grateful remembrance of his unrivalled friendship? If he had bid us do some great thing, as commemorative of his dying for our salvation, ought we not to have done it? Might it not have been claimed at our hands by his great love wherewith he hath loved us? Can any thing in our power be too great to be performed at the request of such a friend? And shall we refuse to eat bread, and drink wine at his table? Shall we refuse this little service to him who hath done so much for us? Is this the return we ought to make to that stupendous love which brought him down into this vale of tears; that engaged him to strive, and labour, and suffer, and die in all the agonies of crucifixion, to save us from eternal con-

demnation, and to make us happy for ever? Is there one attentive mind, in this assembly, that is not struck with the ingratitude of this return?

Stop
further and argument
I might urge, ~~as a third argument~~ for the observance of the Lord's-supper, the TIME of its institution. It was instituted in the NEAR VIEWS OF DEATH. This is a striking circumstance, and particularly noted by the apostle Paul. The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it; and so on. — THE SAME NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS BETRAYED. This circumstance strongly enforces the participation of the sacred supper. There is peculiar weight and energy in the reasonable injunctions of a dying friend or relative. A wilful indifference and disregard to them would argue an unfeeling, unprincipled mind.

Could any of us rest satisfied in the neglect of the dying command of a wise, kind, and venerable parent ; especially of a command easily complied with ? But how much superior a claim hath the dying requisition of Jesus to that of any other ? how much nearer and more important is the relation between him and his people, than between the dearest and most intimate of earthly connexions ? " This do in remembrance of me, " are words which challenge our special regard, considered as the words of our Saviour in the near approach of death.

Lastly, the institution of the supper hath reference to an event in which we ourselves are most intimately concerned. Christ our passover is sacrificed FOR US : THEREFORE let us keep the feast. Had we been required to perpetuate some grand exploit he had at-

chieved, or signal victory he had obtained, from whence we derived no personal advantage, would not our allegiance to him as a sovereign, and our obligations to him as a friend, have demanded our compliance? But the ordinance of his supper is a memorial of the wonders he hath wrought for *u s* : it is a memorial of his voluntary submission to the painful and ignominious death of the cross to expiate *o u r* guilt, to vanquish *o u r* spiritual foes, and to open the way for *o u r* triumphant entrance into the celestial kingdom. To the wondrous transaction commemorated at his table our highest interests are inseparably united. To this we owe our freedom from spiritual slavery, and our escape from eternal ruin ; to this we owe all our enjoyments in this life, and all our prospects of infinitely greater in the next. The death of Christ to save a guilty world, unless we reject the counsel of God against our-

selves, will be the subject of our sublimest praises through an endless duration. This will be the immortal song of the ransomed of the Lord—Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: for he hath redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

What can be farther said

us ~~What shall I say further~~ to prevail on ~~you~~ to keep the feast? What effectual arguments can be made use of for the observance of this evangelical institution, if ^{we} ~~you~~ withstand the united force of those drawn—from the sovereign AUTHORITY of its divine author;—from his matchless FRIENDSHIP to the sons of men;—from the TIME in which he instituted his supper, the same night in which he was betrayed;—and from the CONNEXION of the event it com-

memorates with our eternal felicity? If these powerful arguments fail, where are those to be found that afford any prospect of success? || But in numberless instances these arguments do fail; and their practical influence upon many is prevented—by apprehensions of being disqualified for this holy ordinance;—by a dread of the consequences of an unworthy participation of it;—and by too low ideas of its utility. || ~~These I shall endeavour to obviate in my next discourse.~~

These may in a great measure be obviated by an attention to the solemnity of the Communion service; which it is hoped will have a sufficient influence upon the minds of those present, to induce them to partake of the heavenly Feast which will be offered to them on the approaching ^{future} Sabbath. In a future discourse

it shall be my endeavor to
obviate more at large the
difficulties which have been
raised, & which have too
frequently prevented well
disposed Christians from
a participation of the
^{everlasting}
~~summit~~ blessings which
our holy Religion is ever
ready, by means of the
Sacrament of our Lord Supper
to bestow on her faithful
Followers.

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S E R M O N I I.

O N T H E

C H I E F E X C U S E S

F O R

N E G L E C T I N G

T H E

L O R D ' s - S U P P E R .



S E R M O N II.

I CORIN. V. 7, 8.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED
FOR US : THEREFORE LET US KEEP
THE FEAST.

WHEN we last assembled, I laid before you such arguments and motives as I thought calculated to represent and enforce the obligations which christians are under to celebrate the Lord's-supper. But it was observed, at the close, that the practical influence of them is often prevented—by apprehensions of being DISQUALIFIED for this holy ordinance ;— by a dread of the

CONSEQUENCE of an unworthy participation of it; — and by too low ideas of its UTILITY.

I grant that persons living in the allowed practice of any sin are disqualified for this solemnity. He who habitually committeth sin, is the servant of sin, and therefore an enemy to Jesus Christ. No man can serve these two masters. Habitual sinners have no right to the christian feast. This feast must be kept not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness. Their receiving the memorials of a crucified Redeemer would be an impious profanation of them. They are infinitely more unfit for the sacred supper than a filthy beggar for a royal banquet. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with

Belial? Habitual sinners have no title to the privileges and blessings of the christian covenant, to be enjoyed in time, or in eternity. They stand exposed to the tremendous curse of God. With persons of this character we have, at present, no concern. We would give them no encouragement to keep the feast while sin reigns within them; while they refuse to bow, with willing subjection, to the sceptre of Jesus, who hath a sceptre of righteousness for the sceptre of his kingdom.

But there are well-disposed persons, of a timid temper, who are afraid to approach the holy table. Their fears arise from conscious imperfection. Their imperfections, however, do not furnish a valid plea for their absenting from it. An entire freedom from sin is not necessary to a religious character. There are spots in the brightest object in the

natural world; and in the moral blemishes are to be discerned in the temper and conduct of those whom we hold in deserved veneration for their virtue and sanctity. The best of men are the readiest to lament and to confess theirs. The most distinguished saints recorded in holy writ had moral infirmities cleaving to them, till their dwelling was in the heavens. It was the frank acknowledgment of no less a one than the great apostle of the Gentiles, whose excellencies were surpassed, or equalled, by no mere man that ever appeared on the theatre of the world, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. **P E R F E C T I O N** is the attainment of none on this side the vale of death. **S I N C E R I T Y** is the grand qualification for the divine favour and for the participation of the sacred feast. Let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of **S I N C E R I T Y** and truth.

But, perhaps, you are not SURE that you are possessed of christian sincerity: you are in doubt whether you have been renewed in the spirit of your minds, and brought under the governing influence of vital religion. This is frequently assigned as the reason for not receiving the holy sacrament. It has been maintained that a full assurance of a personal interest in God is essential to the existence of a religious temper. Some among the first reformers, of warm spirits and elevated devotion, who were called to extraordinary services, and had therefore extraordinary manifestations of the divine favour, fell into this erroneous sentiment, from a mistaken notion, that what they experienced was experienced by all the faithful. This is a palpable, and, in some views, a pernicious error. There is a wide difference between the actual residence of holy habits in the mind, and the certain knowledge that they reside there.

The divine image is drawn on many happy souls which have no clear discernment of it. Many depressed and harassed, in this benighted world, with gloomy doubts concerning their spiritual state, are now singing, on the mount of Zion, the triumphant song of Moses and of the Lamb; while many a proud boaster is in that outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Their loud pretensions to bright discoveries of God's special love were as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The best of characters, in this life, being mixt and imperfect, an absolute assurance that they are the heirs of promise, may be the PRETENSION of many, but, I apprehend, is the ATTAINMENT of few.

We should examine, indeed, with serious care what is our reigning disposition. We should commune with our hearts, and our spirits should make di-

ligent search. This is often enjoined in sacred writ; and is especially requisite before receiving the holy sacrament. This service is too solemn to be hastily and rashly performed. It is the direction of an apostle, Let a man examine himself (as to his knowledge of the design and intendment of this ordinance, and as to his prevailing character) and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. If C E R T A I N T Y is not the result of such examination; yet, if our hearts are right with God, we may acquire that humble H O P E of the divine favour, which will be the source of the sweetest satisfactions, and justify our participating of the choicest privileges of the sanctuary. This hope sincere christians might generally attain. Were we to A C C U S T O M ourselves to self-converse and inspection, we could not remain totally ignorant what spirit we are of. If, in consequence

of of a strict, impartial, enquiry into our disposition and life, our hearts condemn us not with any allowed guile ; if we have PROBABLE evidence of our superior regard to things unseen and eternal ; of our cordial esteem of Jesus, and unre-served subjection to him, as our Prince and Saviour ; and of our undissembled affection to all who bear his image ; in one word, if, in any degree, we have probable evidence of our sincere and entire approbation of the gospel plan of saving sinners, why should we absent from the holy table ? Why should we refuse openly to avow this approbation, by receiving the memorials of the Saviour's death. This institution is a seal on God's part and on ours : it is a confirmation by an outward sign of the promises he hath made, through the mediation of his Son, who died to obtain eternal redemption for us ; and a confirmation of our desire and en-

gagement to accept, in the way he hath directed, the promised blessings.

Divines have distinguished between an HABITUAL and an ACTUAL preparation. By the former is meant the POSSESSION of a religious temper; by the latter the happy FRAME of the graces which constitute that temper. A good man cannot engage in this, or in any religious duty, with acceptance and profit, when his thoughts are distracted with worldly cares, and his mind indisposed for the exercises of devotion. When about to enter on the solemnities of religion, we should say to the cares of this life, as Abraham to his servants, abide you here while we go yonder and worship. And we should summon our best dispositions, and charge them to exert their utmost vigour.

In the prospect of communicating some employ much time in preparatory

devotions. I would not discountenance this practice if their circumstances will admit of it. It is their wisdom thus to consecrate the hours they can redeem from their temporal occupations. Devotional exercises are pleasing and improving to a well-tempered mind. Our graces, like our garments, are apt to be discomposed by the bustle of the world, and need to be adjusted before we wait upon God in his sanctuary; and the duties of the closet tend to prepare us for the services of the temple. Yet I must say that a superstitious stress has been laid on MUCH time spent in these preparatory exercises. It has been deemed NECESSARY to the worthy partaking of the sacred supper. But the situation and circumstances of christians are various. A prudent regard to their secular concerns will not allow to all long or frequent retirement; nor is it required of all. God is not a hard master, reaping

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where he hath not sown, or gathering where he hath not strowed. He requires of men according to that they have, and not according to that they have not.

I do not say that any situation will justify an entire neglect of private devotions. These have a just claim to a part, more or less, of every day; and all who wish to find may find opportunity for them. That attention to the interests of T H I S life is beyond due measure, which precludes a daily attention to the interests of the O T H E R. We have lost that day in which we have shown no regard to the great end and purpose of our being. But for those extraordinary devotions, at which I have just hinted, many have not opportunity; nor is the want of it, as some conceive, a sufficient excuse for neglecting to keep the feast. Christians should be so disengaged from the entanglements of

the world as to be able, upon any sudden and unexpected occasion, easily and gracefully to retire from it into the most solemn duties: they should have such a sovereignty over their thoughts as to say to one, go and it goeth; and to another come and it cometh; and to another do this and it doth it. This is a great and valuable attainment. Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that ruleth a kingdom.

I confess this degree of self-government is the acquisition of few or none; and therefore we should be at some pains to put ourselves into a fit posture for this solemnity: nor let any despair of being so, in whatever disadvantageous circumstances providence may have placed them. Employ what time the necessary businesses of life will fairly admit of, in acquiring an actual preparation for it; especially on the day in which

you are to communicate, endeavour to compose and exalt your minds to a recollected devotional frame, by serious converse with yourselves, your Saviour, and your God.—If this were more generally practised previous to the more ordinary duties of social worship, there would not be so much cause to complain of their little influence and effect: we should be more disposed for receiving the seed of the word, and for drinking in the dew of heaven. — Above all, be importunate at the divine throne for the influences of the spirit. These are essential to the acceptable performance of every duty. The preparation of the heart, as well as the answer of the tongue is of the Lord. Let us thus endeavour to be prepared, and we may hope to be welcome guests at our Lord's table.

The second cause assigned for neglecting the christian feast, was a dread

of the CONSEQUENCE of an unworthy participation of it. It is said, in the epistle which contains the text, the eleventh chapter, and twenty-ninth verse, He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. From misapprehensions of the import of this passage, many have been so terrified with the danger of communicating, as to tremble at the very idea of it. But this passage is far from wearing that face of terror, which timorous minds are so ready to imagine. It is an allowed point that the word, which is here rendered by so harsh a term as damnation, ought to be rendered JUDGMENT. And it is evident, from the context, that it relates not to eternal but to TEMPORAL judgment. For this cause, it is subjoined (that is to say, for eating and drinking unworthily) many are weak and sickly among

you, and many sleep; sleep the sleep of death; but when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Bodily distempers were inflicted upon some of the Corinthian church, as a judgment for their unworthy communicating; and as a merciful mean to awaken in them a sense of their sin, and PREVENT their final condemnation.

The Corinthians were highly criminal in the article of the supper. They met together, where they were wont to assemble for publick worship, and eat and drank with great disorder and intemperance. Each having his own separate provisions, as was the custom of the Greeks at their social meals, some indecently and greedily devoured theirs, before others were come to the repast. In eating, says the apostle, every one taketh before other, his own supper. And

the rich provided plentifully for themselves, and drank to excess; sparing nothing of their abundance to their poor brethren, who had none, or at best but a scanty portion. One was hungry, another was drunken. The poor, 'tis likely, murmured at the selfishness and voracity of the rich; and the rich treated the poor with insult and contempt. In short, there was an horrid scene of confusion, excess and riot. And yet the Corinthians were so deluded, as to think that this was celebrating the Lord's-supper: though they had no discernment of the Lord's body; no discernment of any relation the elements bore to his bloody passion; and though their factious intemperate feasting was directly repugnant to the obvious design of that pure, harmonious, friendly institution. Their excesses tended to bring upon them bodily disease. And not only so, but grievous diseases were brought upon them

by the immediate hand of heaven. Divine wisdom saw fit, by these outward visitations, to assert the honour of this venerable appointment, in its infancy. Such were the judgments intended by the apostle; and such was the crime against which they were denounced.

But why should the judgments which were inflicted, and further denounced against the Corinthian professors, for so vile and scandalous a profanation of the holy sacrament, excite a dread of receiving it in any serious Christians, who are deeply impressed with its solemnity, and have a quick resentment of God's displeasure? Such are less likely, than all others, to eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily; and yet these are the persons who are usually most terrified by the apostle's commination.

I acknowledge that the Lord's-supper,

may be profaned by other means, than by such irregularities and excesses as the Corinthians were guilty of. We eat and drink unworthily, however externally decent in the act of communicating, if we eat the bread and drink the wine, with minds inattentive to the great objects represented by them; and especially, with minds under the predominant influence of dispositions and affections, the reverse of those which this holy rite is intended to improve. And I cannot forbear adding, that they eat and drink unworthily, who partake of the elements in submission to the authority of man, and not to the authority of Christ; and with a view to their temporal advantage, and not to their spiritual improvement. What can be a viler profanation of a divine ordinance, than its prostitution to the low purposes of worldly gain? This, unless prevented by timely repentance,

will not escape God's righteous judgment in the final day.

I acknowledge further, that the best are liable to perform this service improperly; and that an improper performance of it cannot but be displeasing to a jealous God. But is not this true of every other duty? Is there not much imperfection in all our devotions, which calls aloud for deep humiliation and repentance? And so boundless is God's mercy, that he admits of repentance for all our imperfections. Receiving the sacrament, without the due exercise of correspondent dispositions, no more excludes us from mercy (as some seem groundlessly to apprehend) than engaging in any other act of religious worship, without a suitable frame of mind. And they who neglect the christian feast because liable to partake of it, without that fixt attention, deep fe-

riousness, and raised devotion, which it justly demands, have equal reason (as hath often been observed, and with justice, on this argument) for the neglect of every other appointed duty. We should take the utmost care to receive the memorials of Christ's death seriously and devoutly. If we fail, we should humble ourselves at the footstool of the divine throne; but our liableness to fail should not prevent our receiving them. For though christians chiefly fear the consequences of communicating; yet, to say the least, there is as much cause to fear the consequences of neglecting to communicate. The command of our Lord to celebrate his supper being directed to all his followers, we cannot innocently disobey it and wear the christian name.

Some apprehend that communicants are bound to a recluse, austere mode of

living, which is not obligatory upon christians at large ; and that a failure in it would render them guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. And, perhaps, with many this is an objection of no inconsiderable weight. But they are strangers to the spirit and genius of our religion, who imagine that it enjoins upon any of its votaries, a severity of manners incompatible with the social intercourses, and real enjoyments of life. Christ's yoke is easy, and his burthen light. Religion does not deem herself honoured by a morose, unsociable disposition ; a gloomy aspect ; or a precise, sanctimonious conduct. These religion disclaims. They are the mask of hypocrisy, or the garb of superstition. Yet it cannot be thought that communicants preserve a decorum or consistency of character, — when they lavish their time in scenes of public dissipation, or private amusement ; — when they

suffer the attractions of company to draw them beyond the bounds of temperance and sobriety ; or, at least, to late and unseasonable hours ; when the duties of the family and of the closet must be entirely omitted, or hastily performed ; — or when they allow themselves to alienate to worldly business ; or waste in ceremonious visits, or excursions of pleasure ; sometimes the whole, at other times a part of that day, which God hath consecrated to his more immediate service. Such liberties are unbecoming a communicant. And I dare not invite any, who will not deny themselves liberties of this nature, to keep the solemn feast. But then I must add, that these liberties are unbecoming every CHRISTIAN, as well as every communicant : nay, I know not how they are reconcileable with a supreme regard to things spiritual and eternal. Tho' their incongruity be more obvious and

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glaring in communicants, than in other professors; yet they are really incongruous with a religious character in all. 'Tis impossible to reconcile, what many modern professors fain would reconcile, a prevailing love of pleasure with the love of God; and a conformity to the manners of this world with scriptural hopes of heaven. Religion where it dwells hath the sovereignty of the heart. But do such liberties afford any proof that the reigning affections are devoted to it? They bear the contrary testimony. In truth, I know of nothing incumbent on communicants, that is not incumbent on them as men and as christians. Without repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; without an habitual subjection to the divine will, and a governing attention to the interests of immortality, none can attain the great salvation; with these none will fall short of it. Nothing can be more

wild and fantastick, than the idea of being saved, if we neglect the christian feast, without that sanctity of disposition and demeanour; without that circumspection and care in our daily walk and conversation; and without that devotedness to our spiritual and everlasting concerns, which are necessary if we keep it.

In the last place, the neglect of the Lord's-supper arises from too low ideas of its UTILITY. Not content with maintaining the just superiority of moral duties over positive precepts, some have spoken of the latter in terms degrading and contemptuous. But is it necessary to build one on the ruins of the other? Because positive precepts are of an inferior order to those of a moral kind, and ought to give place when they interfere with them; does it follow, that, when they do not interfere, they are to be slighted and contemned as vain and use-

less? However different in degrees of importance and utility, all God's precepts concerning all things are right. Positive, as well as moral duties are designed and calculated for the benefit of the observer.

There are those, I own, who have fallen into the other extreme. Some, for instance, look upon the mere act of communicating at the Lord's-table as ensuring their salvation. And others expect instantaneous and almost miraculous effects. They expect to be raised to ecstasy and rapture; to be caught up, like the apostle, to the third heaven. Many have approached the holy table with such extravagant expectations; and been greatly depressed at their disappointment, apprehending that God, in his displeasure, denied them his special presence. These expectations took their rise from false sentiments of this

christian ordinance ; and of the manner of its operation in conveying benefit to the mind. It does not operate as a charm ; but upon rational principles, and, in a great measure, according to the established connexion of things. It is the grand mean of improving the dispositions and graces, which form the christian temper. These dispositions and graces are to be improved, by a serious and devout attention to their respective objects, which are here exhibited under striking representations.

IN GENERAL, it tends to increase our abhorrence of sin ; the deep malignity and dreadful issue of which are no where to be seen, as in the death of Christ. This bears ample testimony that it is exceeding sinful. This exposes its enormous guilt, as a breach of God's law, and its detestable ingratitude, as a contempt of his mercy ; and is the chief

instrument of its destruction. Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The despised preaching of a crucified Saviour hath been the means of effecting, what could not be effected, by the refined speculations, and subtile reasonings of the learned and the wise. The doctrine of the cross, in the apostolick age, and, in more or fewer instances, in every subsequent age, hath triumphed over the strongest corruptions of the human heart. It hath been mighty thro' God to the pulling down of strong holds. And the oftener we view sin through this medium, the deeper will be our resentment of it, and the more determined our resolutions against it. By commemorating the death of Christ to free us from its penalty and power,

its remaining influence in us must diminish and decay.

And this service will increase our zeal and activity in performing our duty. The strongest motives to an obedient life are drawn from the work of redemption. None so powerful as the cords of redeeming love. All others, in comparison, are but as a slender thread. The love of Christ constraineth us, said the great apostle, or (according to the import of the original, as an able critick speaks) bears us away like a strong and resistless torrent, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Under this sweet yet powerful constraint our services will be free and liberal. We shall be ready to every

good work. We shall be like the chariots of a willing people.—Though the fears of Almighty vengeance are, generally, the means of driving men to external acts of duty; yet no duties but what are the effect of more kindly impressions can meet with divine acceptance. The spirit of religion is not a spirit of fear; but of power, and of LOVE, and of a sound mind. That obedience, which is extorted by the terror of the Lord, is mean and fordid: 'tis the obedience of a slave. Generous spirits are actuated by an higher principle, and influenced by nobler motives. And that esteem and veneration for the divine character, which are the genuine source of every acceptable service, will be heightened and improved by the ordinance of the Supper; for here we have the fullest manifestation of the most amiable of God's attributes, — his MERCY.

Besides, by keeping the feast, we renew our engagement to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. We openly recognize our having joined ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. We solemnly swear that we will be faithful to him as our leader: that we will be for him and no other. And will not this solemn transaction put us more upon our guard against the most secret approaches of sin, and strengthen a principle of holy obedience? When pressed by a temptation to the neglect of duty, from an apprehension of some present inconvenience arising from it; or to the commission of sin, from the prospect of some immediate pleasure, or profit, the idea of our sacramental vows will be in the place of a thousand arguments to repel it.

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But the utility of this ordinance may be illustrated, in respect to the INDIVIDUAL graces of the spirit.

It will affect us with a PENITENT sense of sin, to behold the dying of the Lord Jesus. Our thoughts will naturally be led from his sufferings to our sins. And we must be under great insensibility of mind, if we do not feel the emotions of an ingenuous sorrow, when we remember his dying love, and recollect our ungrateful returns to him.

It will add to the power of FAITH. All the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in him amen. They are all confirmed and ratified in his blood. — When we behold him in the agonies of death, by the DESIGNATION of the Father, to save a lost world, shall we not say, in full assurance of faith, He that spared not his own Son, but delivered

him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? What may we not expect from that generous hand, which did not withhold from us his Son, his only Son? A gift to which the treasures of eternity are unequal! — Or when we behold him VOLUNTARILY bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, shall we not more firmly trust in him, now he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, and hath the power of granting what he died to procure? If when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. — And by adding strength to our faith it will add vigour to our HOPE. The same means which improve the one will improve the other. These graces are in perfect union.

It will likewise increase our FEAR of God. We cannot but feel the im-

pressions of fear, when we see him in the grandeur and magnificence of his works; and especially, when we read or hear of his righteous judgments: such as — His burning a city with fire from heaven, for the enormous wickedness of its inhabitants; — His sweeping, with a raging pestilence, a guilty land; — His riding on the wings of a tempest, ravaging, with resistless fury, mighty kingdoms; — or shaking their foundations by the convulsions of an earthquake, and reducing their proudest structures to heaps of ruins; — above all, when we look forward to that tremendous day, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up, and the wicked consigned to the blackness of darkness for ever. These scenes are unutterably dreadful: yet they are not cal-

culated to strike us with an awe of God's majesty, equal to his appearing, in the terrors of his justice, and inflicting on his well-beloved Son, the punishment due to the iniquities of us all.

And as we see, in the memorials of Christ's death, the triumphs of justice; so we see the triumphs of mercy. God hath set forth his son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, not only to declare his righteousness that he might be just; but also the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. So that the sacramental feast will heighten the fervours of religious LOVE. It will be as fuel to the hallowed flame. The love we bear to an earthly friend grows more ardent by recollecting the signal instances of his love to us. And will not our love to our God and Saviour, by recollecting that wondrous love which is so illustriously displayed in the

great work of redemption? — The benignity of God to men is visible in nature and in providence. We are surrounded with incontestable proofs of his bounty and munificence. — But in redemption his goodness beams forth with transcendent glory. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. It is impossible to call up to our attentive thoughts the son of God bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows; suffering, bleeding, dying, to deliver us from the wrath to come, and obtain for us immortal blessedness, and not derive from this affecting view greater ardency of love. The woman, in the gospel, who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wiped them

with the hair of her head, and kissed them, and anointed them with precious ointment, loved much, because much was forgiven her : and shall not we love much if we see in his sufferings, when he bore the curse for us, how much we are forgiven ; and contemplate the immense reward purchased for us at the price of his blood ? Such are the inexhaustible treasures of divine love, that it grants to believing penitents not pardon only, it grants too the great reward of heaven. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. — Every true christian hath in him the love of the Father and of the Son ; but while here below, there are many things to damp and to diminish it : and in the best how little and how languid ! We need to be attentive to its preservation and improvement. And I know of nothing

so well adapted to these valuable purposes, as the devout commemoration of the death of Christ.

Next to the love of God is the love of our fellow M E N. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. A benevolent disposition is a resemblance of the Deity, and a necessary qualification for the intercourses of heaven. To cherish this heavenly and godlike disposition, in the breasts of his followers, was one grand design of our Saviour in the appointment of his supper. It is a feast of love ; and furnishes the most powerful motives to its cultivation. It represents us so nearly and intimately connected with mankind in general, and with christians in

particular, as must awaken the tenderest feelings and affections of the heart. For we being many are one bread and one body ; for we are all partakers of that one bread : and it holds up to our view the most wondrous and attractive example of generous love, and us as the objects of it. And, beloved, when we here behold how much God hath loved us shall we not be more fervent in our love to one another ?

Again, by viewing the deep distresses of the innocent Jesus, we shall become more PATIENT and resigned under the afflictive visitations of providence. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He had a bitter cup that was given him to drink. He had mighty and complicated troubles to encounter. Our troubles at the worst bear no comparison with his. They are as nothing when weighed in the balance.

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Now, by viewing the greater sufferings of another, we diminish our own. Though imagination is apt to magnify our sorrows, when we look to those around us, whose external circumstances wear a happier aspect ; and self-partiality tempts us to murmur and repine at them ; yet how little and inconsiderable do they appear, to a mind conversant with those which were the allotment of God's well-beloved Son ! and if so large a share was appointed to one, of his innocence and excellence of character ; shall not we, undeserving and sinful, see cause, at least, to be acquiescent under the gentle chastisements of the Almighty's hand ?

It will also support and **A N I M A T E** us under the trials and temptations of life, if we fix an eye on the invincible fortitude and magnanimity of our Saviour, in the most pressing seasons. He

did not draw back from the hour of conflict; nor faint in the day of adversity. He met all opposition in the path of virtue and glory, with an intrepid mind; and triumphed over the combined powers of earth and hell. In every scene he appeared with dignity; in none with greater dignity than the scene of his sufferings. — There is something wonderfully assimilating and inspiring in true valour. It cannot but rouse and fire the most timid spirits in a just and honourable cause. What, then, will animate us to fight boldly against the enemies of our eternal salvation: what will prevent our yielding to any difficulties and dangers, in the cause of truth, of righteousness, and of God, like the example of our Leader? We are exhorted, by an apostle, to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the

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cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God: to consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds.

Were it needful, I might point out the happy influence of the holy supper upon ALL the graces of the spirit. It is to all of them, as gentle showers of rain, and the genial warmth of the vernal sun, to the vegetable creation. It will cause the graces that be in us to abound, and make us that we shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But were there no immediate or natural connexion between this holy rite and our religious improvement; we might reasonably infer, from the character of its author, that the due obser-

vance of it shall not be in vain. He will, by his secret influence, render his appointments, when seriously regarded, subservient to very valuable ends. There was no natural connexion between the Israelites their slaying a lamb, and sprinkling its blood on the door-posts of their houses, and the preservation of their first-born from death. There was no natural connexion between looking upon the brazen serpent, erected upon a pole in the wilderness, and being healed of a deadly sting: and yet, in the former instance, their first-born were secured from the sword of the destroying angel; and in the latter, it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.

St. Paul speaks of the last supper as the communion of the body and blood of Christ. The cup of blessing which

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we bless, says he, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Serious communicants jointly partake of the christian feast; thereby expressing their affection and friendship for each other, as members of the same family, and sharers of the same privileges and blessings. And they not only hold communion with one another, but likewise with Christ their head: they renew the surrender of themselves into his hands, as their Redeemer and Lord; act faith in him, and love to him, under these great and endearing characters; and receive from him spiritual blessings, and an earnest of eternal, as the reward and purchase of his death. Many, of too sober and steady a disposition to be borne away by the flights of enthusiasm, have happily experienced its beneficial effects. Many have found it good for

them to draw near to their God and Saviour in this solemnity. They have found it the plentiful source of refined pleasure, and rich improvement. Are not some present who can bear testimony in its favour? Must you not chiefly ascribe to it, under the benediction of heaven, your advances in the divine life, and your consolation in the ways of God?

Do no persons, then, of worthy characters neglect the christian feast? I dare not say this; but I do say that their characters are LESS worthy in consequence of this neglect. The divine life that is in them hath not that sprightliness and vigour it would have acquired had they made use of this grand mean of spiritual improvement. Their graces differ from what they might have been, under the benign influence of this holy institution, as a

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plant secluded from the sun, from another open to its beams every returning day. And their graces being comparatively feeble, their consolations must be comparatively small. Faint impressions of God's image do not produce bright and cheering evidences of being born of him. Nor will he liberally grant the consolations of his spirit, to those who seek them not where they are principally to be found. In his just displeasure, he often withholds from them the light of his countenance, and suffers dark and desponding thoughts to haunt and terrify their souls. Nay, the omission of this duty must of itself occasion painful sensations in a serious mind. It hath given deep concern to many, when the time of their departure hath been at hand, who, otherwise, would have passed through the vale of death with calmness and composure, if not with cheerfulness and joy. Such instan-

ces have fallen within our observation. The celebration of the Lord's-supper is more intimately connected, than seems generally attended to, with peace of mind and a growing meetness for the heavenly state.

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Divine mercy and wisdom have furnished the table; and both duty and interest are pressing in their invitations to it. Come then, my fellow christians! eat of the bread and drink of the wine. Seek no vain excuse, like those in the parable, who were bidden to the marriage supper. Suffer no unreasonable prejudices, nor superstitious fears, to deprive you of so rich and divine an entertainment.—If in advanced life, come, for all things are now ready. Thankfully and joyfully receive the memorial and pledge of your Saviour's love. Draw no argument, from having long neglected his dying command, for still conti-

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ning in the neglect of it. Past neglects cannot justify future. Lost opportunities cannot too soon be redeemed.—Or, if in the day of youth, come to the holy table. You cannot be too early in your sacramental dedication, provided you have (what is not difficult to be attained) a competent knowledge of the christian covenant, and cordially consent to it. This service, in early life, will meet with special acceptance, reflect a lustre on your character, and be a mighty preservative from the snares of the destroyer. It will, probably, prevent those approaches to sin, to which thousands, who had no apprehension of losing their innocence, have dated their ruin.

Some of us have communicated at the table of the Lord, and have a prospect this day of repeating the solemn service. May we see him, as I trust

we have seen him, in his sanctuary, at these favoured seasons! May his special presence cheer and invigorate every holy principle in our souls! — The privileges we enjoy are many, and they are great. We are planted in the house of the Lord, under the attention of his eye, and the culture of his hand. No advantages are wanting, for our improvement in the amiable virtues of a good heart, and a good life. Let us remember, that unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required. Let us adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let integrity and uprightness be our inseparable companions. Let it be visible, in our daily deportment, that we have been with Jesus; that we possess his spirit as well as wear his name; that the principles which govern us, are superior to those which rule the world; that we look not at the things which are seen, and are

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temporal; but at the things which are not seen, and are eternal.

How long we shall continue under the means of religion, depends on his sovereign will, who hath the keys of death, and the invisible state. But at the longest, brethren, our time is short. Our days, months, years, are on a rapid wing. We cannot be far from the borders of eternity. Its awful scenes are opening to our view. He, whose death we are about to commemorate, is coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Lift up your heads, with joy, ye humble followers of the Lamb! for your compleat redemption draweth nigh.

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